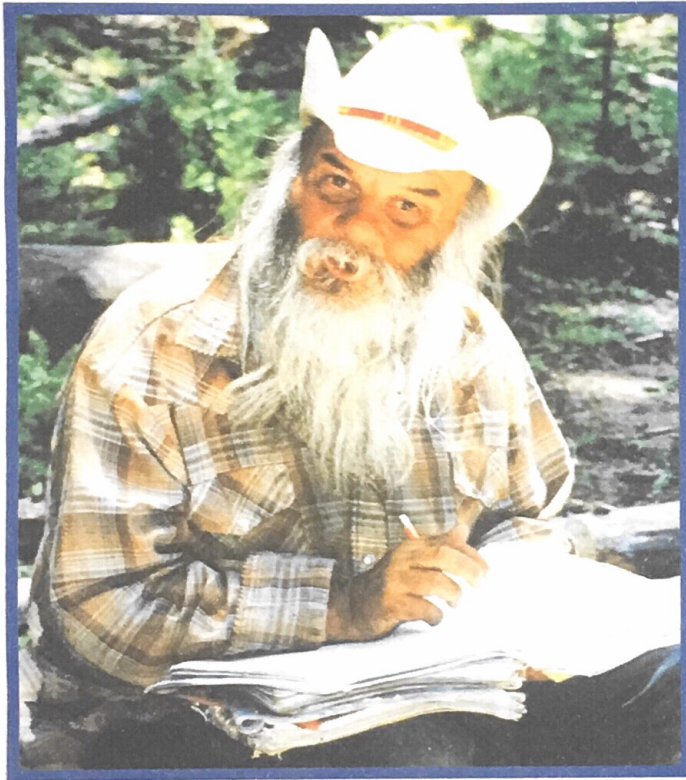




# Rainbow Family

## Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.  
Scanned in 2018.  
Jodey Bateman may be  
contacted on Facebook.*

03.C MONTE TIDWELL - "Diary of the  
New Mexico  
Gathering"  
[2 of 3]

16 pages

[03.C]



people were asked to come help carry supplies to the kitchen. So many people were coming and carrying off food that the people in security camp began to worry whether or not it was being distributed properly or even if it was reaching the kitchens and not individual camps. They halted everything and began debating about how to organize distribution. They argued for a long time and people who were carrying the food got frustrated and went back to their camps. At the council they decided to move the supply depot and put it in charge of only a few people. I am told that security camp is made up of street people who are used to fighting, but here they limit it to verbal fighting. One of their functions, I've found out, is to find lost children. They are there mainly in case of a break out of physical violence, which has never happened at a gathering, but the numbers of people who come continue to grow and the potential is there.

Even though in the past two days I've become a part of this kitchen and camp, I'm thinking about camping close to the main grounds, where most of the action is.

It seems that many of the people who come here didn't come individually but <sup>as</sup> a group that sometimes has a name separate from the Rainbow Family name. It appears that many of the groups own school buses that they travel in. Some follow the fruit harvest every year, I'm told. The others may live on communes and have the school buses for traveling en masse. Some, I'm told, just constantly travel, camping at various spots with numbers going into towns or wherever to look for jobs when money is needed. The epitome of transportation for any group associated with the Rainbow Family is the school bus.

We ate breakfast in camp this morning. It was a miniaturized version of the large evening meal - 50 people. The only prerequisites for eating, it seems, are the circle and the chanting of "OM" which seems to have become a tradition in the Family.



There is some disorganization concerning meals now that the main gathering site has been moved. That's why our camp and our kitchen ate where we are. The two kitchens are not co-ordinated as to what each one should make, but some representatives went from our camp/kitchen to talk to the other kitchen and some of the organizers on how to co-ordinate efforts. I also overheard that there is an author on "living in the 21st century" who is coming to our camp here to set up a sprout kitchen. What that is, I don't know. The man is supposedly already here at the gathering and will come to our kitchen today. Also there were funds being collected to bring an old Hopi medicine man down from Arizona named Grandfather David. His adopted granddaughter is a member of the Family and she said he has wanted to come to the gathering every year to speak of the Hopi prophecy. This gathering is the closest one ever to him. He is blind and needs someone to go get him.

There was almost a fist fight in our camp this morning after breakfast. Someone had a canteen missing and started making accusations of stealing, not directly to anyone. He was quite angry and was cursing loudly. A person who was trying to calm him down finally got angry and there was almost a fight. Many people became involved and finally the threat was over after much talk of love, brotherhood, the curse of being hung up on materialism etc.

I volunteered to wash dishes this morning and I have been doing that up until now.

Saturday P.M. Dinner tonight was held in the new location. There will eventually be a circle of tipis around the central fire, but today there are only three. Dinner was announced by Barry and Michael Sun. Barry has a bull's horn and Michael Sun has a conch shell. They both blew several blasts and traded and blew some more. People assembled in the circle marked out for tipis.



and lodges. We formed three concentric circles at Barry's request and Barry announced that he was going to offer up a prayer for the fire he was about to light. People began the "OM" chant while Barry lit the fire. I was close to him and could see him praying with his head raised to the sky. Barry almost always wears a cowboy hat with several feathers in it, glasses, a long sleeve shirt, a loincloth and moccasins.

The same "leaders" made announcements. It's becoming more clear as to whom the real organizers are, who is trying to be a leader and the members who just follow but who often assume leadership roles when needed. It was announced that tomorrow morning in the center circle there would be a work committee council to organize the things that need to be done. It's still quite a few days before the gathering date, but more people are arriving every day.

The kitchens are organized now. The one I moved from today is now only for baking and sprouts. The other is for all cooking and fruits since it is closer to the main meal site.

I am now camped on a bluff above the circle of tipis.

After dinner tonight the scene turned into a very musical one. Many people brought out instruments and it became much like a rock concert. Many people were singing and dancing. I can still hear the music going on, especially the flutes. It's getting too dark to write.

Sunday June 2? After breakfast this morning there was a work council to decide what needs to be done before the masses arrive. Garrick is definitely one of the main organizers. Barry arrived late, but he is also well-established as a leader. Barry made the statement that he wanted more involvement from everyone because "frankly after doing one of these six years in a row, it gets a little boring. I'd just like to hang out with the people for a while and quit working."



Michael John is trying hard to be a respected leader but he is making a few people angry. He jumps up at times and makes announcements that he deems important. It seems that the Rainbow Family is in a bit of financial trouble right now. There is a fruit picking company from Arizona called the Eden Fruit Company that has been supplying the gathering with free grapefruits and some oranges and bananas. They brought in 75 crates of fruit Friday night and are bringing in 150 crates Monday night. If the Family expects to feed all those who will show up, they will need much more food. They have made a deal with Eden Fruit Company that depends upon the amount of money that can be raised here at the gathering. Eden Fruit has a vegetable and fruit connection in Mexico that can supply many varieties at about 15¢ a pound. If the Family has \$1,500 by Monday night when the free fruit comes in, the Eden Fruit people will go get this produce from Mexico. At the moment the Family's trust fund is \$96, so Garrick announced that they needed \$1,404 more. He first asked if everyone thought it was feasible to attempt to raise the money. When most agreed they should try, a hat was passed around the breakfast circle.

Some of the work crews formed were the bridge building crew, the shitter digging crew, the sweat lodge area building crew, the garbage crew. The Rainbow Family are very ecologically conscious. They have established an area for garbage divided into glass, plastics, aluminum, other metals and a compost heap of food, peelings and other food not eaten. This garbage will all be carried when the gathering is over. Everyone is very aware of littering or dumping anything in the river. If anyone is seen doing these things there is usually a verbal reprimand about taking care of the earth or some such rap.



Also there is no using of soaps of any kind in the river for bathing. People take water from the river in basins, bathe out of the basin and then throw the soapy water on rocky soil or sandy areas. The shitters are long, shallow, narrow latrines that are dug high up in places where the waste won't leach into the water table. The bottom of the shitters are lined with rocks. When almost full they are covered over with dirt. The sweat lodge area is being remodeled according to the instructions given by an Indian who has arrived. I don't know how of which tribe he is. I know there will be a central fire for heating rocks, four sweat lodges - one in each of the cardinal directions and dirt paths leading from them to the fire (This is to allow evil spirits a way out of the ill body into the fire) and altars between the sweat lodges, I think.

The healing lodge is being moved to the main circle of tipis also. Barry wants all important things centrally located.

There are many more Indians here now than when I first arrived. I've met Indians from the Aleutian Islands and all the way from Ecuador.

There are many people here now who claim to be healers. I haven't met any personally nor have I attended a healing ceremony or meeting. These will not begin to occur frequently until later. I just talked to Little Falcon who used to work in a restaurant called Carnival Cafe out of Boulder, Colorado. This cafe supplied last year's gathering with kitchen gear, labor and food. The cafe was closed early this year, but all the employees, I've found, are the people in charge of the main kitchen.

Monday June 27 - There is a spot in Burnt Corral Canyon set aside for mothers to bring their children while they are busy working or playing. There has been a day care type place at every gathering and it's always called Kiddie City. This spot has its own kitchen for the kids. Most of the children run around nude and most I've found are very unabashed about approaching or talking to adults.



Some are shy. There are many mother-child couples here with no father. I've heard two discussions in which the mothers were talking about who the father could be. It seems that once they have the support of the Family, the importance of the father figure diminishes.

The females with the Family seem very strong willed. At councils they don't hesitate to speak their minds and some are very assertive in organizing work forces or whatever. Most of them seem very much in the Women's Lib genre.

The Indian influence on the Family is becoming more apparent. Many people are wearing loincloths and feathers and there are more Indians present. People have explained to me that owl feathers are not to be worn or used to adorn structures because they are used for bewitching people. The tipi circle is becoming larger. In the center of the tipi circle is the sacred fire, surrounded by a large circle of rocks with paths leading off in the four directions. Here all councils are held.

The Rainbow Family has apparently impressed many Indian tribes. Michael Sun and Pukulani are going to be allowed to participate in Hopi ceremonies. They are both white, and if I'm right, it's extremely rare for Hopis to allow whites to watch these, much less participate. I was told the Hopis are opening up to people "who are of the right heart." Michael Sun and Pukulani left today to get Grandfather David, the old Hopi medicine man.

Barry announced that on the 30th of this month he will guide some federal officials, press and any interested public through the gathering site here. He hopes for us to set a good example, he said, so that they will see the Family in a positive light from now on.

We just had a pre-dinner council at the sacred circle. A buffalo horn was held by the speaker and all attention was given



to whomever held it. Barry spoke first and announced that there would be a council every morning before breakfast and every evening before dinner to give everyone a chance to speak from the heart. This is a better arrangement than before because previously all announcements were made during the meals, which irritated many people who were more interested in eating than listening. There are more people here - approximately 600 - and the more people there

are, the more unwieldy and rowdy the gathering gets. Barry stated that all councils up until the 4th of July would be concerned with clarifying who the Rainbow Family is and after the 4th, the councils will discuss "what next."

Barry is very intent on obtaining land from the federal government and is very optimistic about it. On the 7th there will be a meeting with federal officials to discuss land for the Rainbow Family. Barry plans on giving an account of the Rainbow Family's history during the first series of councils and from anyone else who has been with the Family a while.

On the 4th (as he points to the highest mountain to the west) we will all council there and have a time of silence. Then the councils after that will find out who is serious about staying together as a united tribe, he says.

Sunny, Barry's mate (not wife) spoke next. She is in charge of the medical facilities here. She announced a series of workshops to be held during the course of this gathering that pertain to healing. She demanded that the sisters here not be referred to as "chicks" or "bitches", and also that no one use the terms mankind or brotherhood but rather familyhood or other words like that. She also asked that God not be referred to as "He" but simply be called the Great Spirit.

The horn was then passed to John who had brought it and he told the story behind it. It seems that a brother was walking to the top of a mountain in Colorado to watch the sunrise. A ray of the sun



lit up at his feet and there lay the buffalo horn. After he picked it up and began walking back, he realized that he was seeing in a 360° circle - seeing everything on all sides of him. He gave the horn to John to bring home because he knew it was powerful medicine.

The horn was then passed to Jodey, who began telling a story, but it began raining hard all of a sudden and the council was adjourned. Here I am lying in my crude shelter of wood and plastic, writing in the rain. Above me are Apache wall writings on the mesa and below me very far is the maintipi circle.

A very nice place to camp.

Tuesday June 28 - An amazing event occurred last night. During the storm, lightning struck a tree on top of the mesa above the canyon. The crashing sound was tremendous and many people saw it happen. At first there was no fire, but just a little smoke. It appeared to be smoldering, but controlled by the rain. Most of the people were at the evening meal site preparing to eat. Soon a blaze appeared in the tree that was obviously growing. A few people that were near the tree began yelling for water and tools. The whole evening meal group broke up and ran to put out the fire. We formed a bucket line from the river, up the cliff to the top of the mesa in approximately 15 minutes. Soon we had tools and buckets of water passing up. There were at least 300 people involved in putting out the fire. The rapidity of the organization without any direct leadership was amazing. Some of the group were experienced firefighters and they were allowed to work closest to the tree. It was a very large tree and eventually had to be cut down. Everyone in the line was having a great time. Looking down from the top of the mesa where I was and seeing the line extend far below to the river was quite a sight.

It just happened to be Barry's birthday, so someone announced that this was his candle and everyone began singing "Happy



Birthday,"

The council this morning mainly discussed work groups and sanitation. There was a fire crew assembled. Another crew was sent to a place near Las Cruces where there is a bumper crop of melons and canteloupes and the farmers are giving many away to whomever comes and picks. There was a representative from Eden named White Dog who asked for a truck to haul produce from one of their trucks that had broken down. He got one from one of the Rainbow members. Also with the influx of people here, the assigned panhandlers have come up with a total of \$1,000 approximately, which satisfied the Eden people, who are going to front the rest of the money until they get back with the Mexican produce. By then, another \$500, they believe, will be raised.

We were informed that a university lab was testing the water downstream from the site. They ran tests before the Rainbow Family arrived and will be running them until after we leave to determine the amount of pollution in the Gila River brought on by the gathering. There were many sharp requests on keeping the river clean. Garrick said that there were many people who didn't particularly like the Rainbow Family and that they may use their statistics against them to hamper their efforts to obtain land. Many other crews were organized at the meeting to handle other jobs. Volunteers were obtained for washing dishes, hauling produce from the supply depot (which is about a three mile walk), shitter digging (with much advice on how it should be done) working in the information center etc.

There are many more people coming into the gathering. The group composition image is very diffuse. There are people in their 60's and many high school age kids who just recently are arriving. It's truly an amazing site. I was talking to one person who was pointing out the beneficial things the Family has done for



people. He reinforced my belief that there is a strong lower and working class element among the "hard core" members. Many of the people who stick with the Family have no home to go to. Many of them were "street people", ex-bikers, alcoholics or transients who find in the Family a security and unity they have never experienced. The Family provides them with their first chance for human dignity. These people become health conscious, environmentally conscious, receive affection and recognition and learn to care for each other and be concerned.

This year, I've been told, the negotiations with Federal officials have gone very smoothly. The Federal officials, it seems, realize there's no way to stop the flood of people, which gives the Rainbow Family a little power in negotiations.

I met a man named Foxfire who is at least in his 50's. He used to be a jazz musician and has toured the world doing concerts. He told me he got fed up with the music business and began working on the revolution during the early Nixon administration. He says he really didn't intend to be doing what he is doing, but just saw a vacuum to be filled and filled it. He said now he's waiting for someone to take his place so he can move on to another phase of his life.

There are many interesting counter-culture types here. They come to the gathering to be together en masse, it seems. Certainly a supportive function. The Family itself is more apolitical than anything else. The leaders, other than Garrick, don't seem to be too aware of social and political happenings or the implications of their group. Barry is more into the mystical, chosen people trip. Of course many leftist activists come to the gathering but nothing of political import has ever been brought up by them. It seems they come to the gathering for a little R-and-R and to get away from the political scene.

Concern with spirituality is definitely a strong component of



the Family Ideology. Some members are very much into spiritualism, mysticism, religion, whatever you want to call it. But by no means are all the people who attend. There is much talk of spiritual emphasis and this definitely sets the tone for the gatherings. But the rowdiness, arguing and conflicts are very much part of the tone, too. People come to the gatherings like they are big parties as much as they come because they are spiritual gatherings.

Personally, this scene seems to me to be what is left of the original hippie movement. The rest of the hippie movement has been commercialized, though values have changed. These people do form a culture that is very different from mainstream American culture.

One thing I've heard discussed a lot is where jobs can be found or where money can be made for a while. It seems that one function of the gathering for the "road" people is the swapping of information about situations in different locales, especially the job situation.

The council didn't come off tonight. No one has seen Barry all day. Garrick also took off into the mountains to rest. They are both obviously tired of handling all the responsibility, but no one else seems to command the respect they do. People, I believe, are just used to their presence as leaders. Barry is not against having more gatherings, I am told, but he is against himself being the organizer.

The music after the evening meal is an every night affair. It is such a conglomeration of styles that it has to be called spontaneous self-expression music. At times it sounds very African. Drums are the main instrument and there are many of them around which people form a circle. At times it sounds Indian.

There is always shouting and wild dancing. Many whoops and hollers. Other instruments are maracas, washboards - mainly percussion. Early every morning I've noticed that someone gets up and plays a very haunting melody on the flute. Going through the canyon at daybreak, the music has a very eerie effect.



Medicine Story arrived today. Everyone seemed quite excited about that. He is a Wampanoag Indian from New York who runs Akwesasne Notes, a left-wing Indian newspaper. He is an MD who quit that profession to become a traditional medicine man.

Wednesday 29th This morning Medicine Story led the council. He is well respected. Everyone listened to him attentively. He has been to every gathering, he told me later. He was very eloquent. He talked about how much more democratic the Indian council was than our two-party system. He stressed the fact that this gathering was still in its preparatory stage and that we need to harness our energy and volunteer ourselves to work together. He talked about caring for our Mother Earth and healing the wounds in Her that we have caused.

Barry, Garrick and the other organizers seem to be laying back and relaxing. They are obviously tired of all the responsibility.

There are more people coming in that have never been to a gathering before. The organization of meals and councils becomes a little more difficult as these people have to become socialized into the way things are done here.

The councils sometimes turn into bitch sessions as people become a little more unruly and have to be reminded to "honor the staff." The common complaints are dogs, thefts, and people freaking out on jimson weed.

Some people like to stay up all night playing guitars and singing. Other people have complained that it keeps them awake, so they designated a place for those who like to stay up late to go and do it there.

(This is all bad writing, it seems, because it's been such a drawn-out day and it's now 3:45 a.m.)

My experience with the medical crew here has revealed some disorganization that occurs at all the gatherings. When



people are organized into work crews, there are usually too many chiefs and not enough Indians. People want to be authoritative and it causes much confusion and bickering. There was a big argument over Western modern medicine and herbal medicine among the medical crew. We had to rush one person out of the valley to an ambulance tonight and it was very chaotic. We built a makeshift stretcher and managed to get him out. While waiting on the ambulance,

we formed a circle and people began OMing. Barry kept saying "Give him good energy," "Love can heal" things like that. A few people prayed over him, massaged him or laid their hands on him.

We have supplies that cover basic first aid needs and we have a lot of herbal medical supplies, which most people here seem to prefer.

The kitchen didn't make enough food to feed everyone tonight. They apparently didn't expect the onslaught of so many people. I would estimate there are more than 800 people here now.

I talked to Medicine Story tonight and asked him what comprised the Rainbow Family outside of the gatherings. He told me, "Not much, really." He said that many people say they are members of the Rainbow Family after they've been to a gathering and feel a strong association with the Family's values. He said the Family has organized a few caravans that travel around after a gathering. They travel in school buses and according to him, the purpose of these caravans is to expose people to alternate lifestyles and make them more environmentally conscious.

Thursday... 30th Medicine Story led this morning's council too. He patterned it after the Iroquois model. He began the council by explaining that the Iroquois offer a prayer before every council which involves group affirmation whenever he says "So be it our minds." He then gave the prayer in which he offers greetings and thanks to all the People, to the Mother Earth, to the plants, animals, Elder Brother Sun, Grandmother Moon, the star beings and the Creator. It was a lengthy prayer.



He also suggested that people be silent after the OM instead of yelling and screaming. He said he realized that there was a lot of energy created in the OM circle and that the tendency was to let it out, but that if we held on to the energy in silence, we can use it the rest of the day. The people who had a specific message "from the heart" were asked to form an inner circle and pass the staff (buffalo horn). The medical tent made

requests for supply donations and volunteer work. They gave the usual warnings of disease and against taking jimson weed.

There are many testimonial type messages that sound very religious. One person this morning simply said, "I've been looking for someone to love me for eight years and I've found all of you." Many people say, "I love you." One said, "This is the first place I've ever been able to look at total strangers and call them brother or sister and tell them 'I love you' and mean it." There are also many lost and found messages in the council before breakfast.

There are very many people coming in now. One person claims to be a UN representative on vacation. He came in wearing a suit and tie (which is a strange sight out here) and carrying a large UN flag. He wears a fez with a feather in it. One person came in this morning riding a bicycle. I don't know how he got it down here.

The morale among the people who have been working on the site, I would say, is very high. Everyone is saying that this gathering is running smoother than any they've held, even though it seems disorganized at times.

Medicine Story stressed that in the Rainbow Family there are no leaders, that everyone was equal here and had an equal voice. Michael John got up and gave a vague, flowery speech about the gathering. The most common word used here is "energy." He talked about the proposed caravan to look for land after the



and about "sharing our vision."

The beginning of the gathering is officially tomorrow and people are beginning to announce workshops and healing gatherings for tomorrow also.

Angers flare at times when people bring up the touchy subjects like dogs, anyone trying to proselytize or push their trip etc.

Tonight there will be a ceremony on top of the mesa led by Medicine Story to welcome the full moon. Someone mentioned that there may be some peyote present. Medicine Story became very insistent that if anybody had peyote it should be taken ceremoniously and in a sacred manner and not just for kicks.

The councils are becoming much longer and starting much earlier in the morning as the time comes closer to the beginning. Many people who have big egos and want attention use the councils as a sounding board just to be heard.

There are now 11 tips almost forming a circle. The variety of people here is becoming more diverse. There are now people coming who are not "road" people or "hard core" family members.

The leader/organizers are hard to approach.

Notes: No time to write. Councils longer and more emotional - testimonials, talk of prophecies, Revelations, chosen people, impending doom, open mind, tolerance of other's belief, a few arguments, supportive and repetitive at times.

Grandfather David arrived. Treated like a guru. Spoke - complete silence. Will speak of prophecy later. Much respect and love for him. Had to be helped around. Asked for help for Hopi land. Received thunderous applause and yells.

Garrick - saw that the councils were getting too long. Suggested that the cooks blow horn to end council. Said, "We are a young tribe and we are learning to organize." He is a good organizer.

Talked about passing the hat again for general fund - gas for shuttle trucks, food, medical supplies, hospital bills etc. Will do



it at dinner. Suggested also that we camp in groups to watch for "lifters." Said these people haven't found a place inside themselves to share.

Tonight I'm going to the full moon ceremony.

The Hare Krishna people have arrived also.

The councils are becoming hard to maintain. Many shouts and interruptions from people not speaking at times. Have to be reminded to "respect the staff."

Friday 1 The full moon "ceremony" was far from being ceremonial. There were too many people to organize efficiently and there was no central leader to do so. Peyote was passed out randomly but those who came expecting a structured ceremony like that of the Native American Church were disappointed. Many left. There was a large central fire with musicians around it playing rather fast music. There were many people dancing, but most were just sitting. There was one group far to the side of the loud music that were sitting amidst lit candles and listening to Medicine Story tell the full moon story of the Wampanoag. After the story someone brought out some ceremonial pipes (flutes) that were on loan to him from a museum. These were very high pitched and caused vibrations throughout the body to be felt. It was explained that these were healing vibrations that united the seven chakras in the body.

The council this morning resembled last night's. There were many speeches given that stated the Rainbow Family is fulfilling prophecies of the Indians and of Revelations. Many emotional testimonials, much talk of impending crisis in our world, and that that this "tribe" are a chosen people. All people at the council may not agree with all these things but they listen respectfully.

The councils are getting more emotional; the listeners cheer more as they hear things they like. But they are getting